

Choosing an Online Provider

A Guide for Schools Purchasing Course Instruction and Content

This resource is designed for school implementation of a blended or online learning environment by purchasing course instruction AND content. These questions are intended to guide a district into a successful partnership with an online provider. Some of these questions may be answered by the online provider while others are best answered by district personnel during analysis of course content.

Accreditation - Legal - Financial

- Is this course already on the [Arkansas Department of Education approved course list?](#) If the answer is no, the district should first seek course approval from the [Curriculum and Instruction Unit](#). A course cannot be offered as an online course if it is not approved to be taught by an Arkansas school.
- Is this provider on the Arkansas Department of Education approved online provider list?
- What agency/entity is responsible for designing the course content?
- What agency/entity is responsible for employing a highly qualified instructor for this course?
- Is the course content approved by the [National Athletic Collegiate Association?](#)
- Is the course/instructor approved by College Board, if applicable. Does the instructor possess certificates of training from the College Board and a College Board approved syllabus? Will they be College Board trained every five years? These are requirements if the Arkansas pays for the exams.
- What agency/entity is responsible for designing and supporting the course content?
- What is the cost for this service? Per student? Per course? What is the process to drop a student? Will the school receive a refund if a student drops prior to a specific date?
- What are the policies that are associated with the provider? Timelines? Deadlines?
- Are there textbooks or other instructional materials needed for this course content?
- Is a policy statement posted on the provider's website and/or in the learning management system disclosing the organization's information gathering and dissemination practices?
- Does the course create equal educational opportunities for students from diverse racial, ethnic, social-class and cultural groups?
- Is the content up-to-date, accurate, and free of any bias?
- Is there a "Code of Conduct" for netiquette standards, copyright and academic integrity?
- Is this course content designed with [universal design principles](#) to ensure accessibility by all students? Does this course content conform to the [U.S. Section 504](#) and [Section 508](#) provisions for electronic and information technology as well as the [W3C's Web Content Accessibility Guidelines \(WCAG 2.0\)?](#)

Highly Qualified Instructor

- Who will provide me with the teacher-of-record data needed for my school?
- What training has the instructor had in online delivery of content?
- Can the district obtain an official transcript reflecting at least a Bachelor's Degree?
- Can the district obtain Highly Qualified information to keep on file at the district and enter into APSCN?
- Is the degree in the academic content-subject area?
- Does the instructor hold an Arkansas Educator's license in content-area being taught?
- If the degree is not in the content-subject area do they have a program of study in the area? or Certificates of professional development in the area? or an official score report reflecting passing scores on the appropriate content-area assessments as mandated by the Arkansas State Board of Education?
- Can the district obtain Highly Qualified information to keep on file at the district and enter into APSCN?
- Does district and/or provider have verification of a successful completion of a criminal records check and the successful completion of a Child Maltreatment Central Registry check as set forth in Ark. Code ANN 6-17-414?

Technology - Communication - Support

- What are the course's system requirements regarding hardware and software?
- Before the course begins, are students provided with multiple learning resources that prepare them for the online course? For example textbook, instructional materials, links to browser plugins, and other software students must install.
- What connectivity is recommended per student for optimum access?
- Who will provide technical support to students and parents?
- Who do I call/contact if I have an issue with the content or course design?
- Who do I call/contact if I have an issue with the instructor?
- What type of professional development is provided to our administrators?
- What resources are provided to assist in educating parents about this course or online learning?

Course Content Design

Standards, Goals, Objectives

- Is the course content appropriate for grade-level expectations and readability levels?
- Are the content and assignments for the course explicitly and thoroughly aligned to the Common Core, Arkansas academic standards, curriculum frameworks and assessments?
- Is the course content aligned to nationally-accepted content standards such as Advanced Placement, computer science, technology courses, career and technical education, etc.?
- Is a clear, complete course overview and syllabus with timeframes, communication expectations, and grading policy included in the course for students and parents?
- Within the learning management system, are course goals and objectives, explicitly stated and easily found by students?
- Is the student's level of mastery measured against each goal and objective?
- After reading the list of goals and objectives, will students be able to understand what they will be learning throughout the course?
- Are information literacy and communication skills incorporated as an integral part of the course curriculum?

Organization and Personalization

- Is this course content designed to be totally self-paced, totally instructor-based, or is it self-paced with built-in timelines?
- Does the course design accommodate multiple school calendars; e.g., block, 4X4 and traditional schedules?
- Is the course organized by units and lessons that fall into a logical sequence?
- Does each unit and lesson include an overview describing objectives, activities, assignments, assessments, and resources to provide multiple learning opportunities for students to master the content?
- Does the course utilize consistent and predictable navigation methods? Are students able to move logically and easily between areas of the course; color, graphics and icons are used to guide the student through the course; and a consistent look and feel exist throughout the course (consistent text, colors, bullets, and heading styles)? Minimal training should be needed for successful navigation.
- Do the course design and course instructor provide students multiple paths of learning based on student needs that engage students in a variety of ways?
- How do the course design and instructor provide a personalized learning plan for the student (s) enrolled?
- Do students have access to resources that enrich the course content?
- Does the course provide opportunities for students to be actively engaged in meaningful and authentic learning content experiences such as collaborative learning groups, student-led review sessions, games, analysis or reactions to videos, discussions, concept mapping, analyzing case studies, etc.?

- Do the course content and the instructor address remediation or extended learning opportunities for each skill?
- Are students given voice and choice in assignments and learning paths?
- Are learning activities and other opportunities created to foster instructor-student interaction?
- What is the instructor's role in making modifications for students?

<i>Assessments and Feedback</i>

- Are the strategies used to assess students throughout the course are consistent with and aligned to what is presented in the course goals and objectives document posted within the course content?
- Are pre-tests provided to assess student readiness?
- Are ongoing, varied, and frequent assessments conducted throughout the course to inform instruction and ensure student preparedness for the next lesson?
- Do assessment strategies and tools make the student continuously aware of his/her progress in class and mastery of the content?
- Are student-selected assessment options available to allow learners to demonstrate mastery in different ways?
- Are rubrics, rationale, and/or characteristics are provided for each graded assignment?
- Are grading rubrics provided and shared with students?
- What is the feedback policy for providing assistance and guidance to the student and/or parent?
- Do students receive timely and frequent feedback on their progress that emphasizes the intended learner outcomes? Is the feedback highly individualized, detailed, and recommend specific, individualized improvement, and strategies to encourage continued progress toward mastery?
- Do instructor-student interactions begin early enough in the course to confirm active participation by all students?